

**Thomas Jefferson to Robert Brent, March 10, 1807, from  
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Ford.**

**TO ROBERT BRENT<sup>1</sup> J. MSS.**

<sup>1</sup> An official of the "Territory of Columbia," now known as the District.

Washington, Mar 10, 1807.

Sir, —I have received your letter of yesterday, asking the application of a part of a late appropriation of Congress, to certain avenues and roads in this place.

The only appropriation ever before made by Congress to an object of this nature, was "to the public buildings & the highways *between* them." This ground was deliberately taken, and I accordingly restrained the application of the money to the avenue between the Capitol & the Executive buildings, and the roads round the two squares.

The last appropriation was in terms much more lax, to wit, "for avenues & roads in the district of Columbia." This, indeed, would take in a large field, but besides that we cannot suppose Congress intended to tax the people of the U S at large, for all the avenues in Washington & roads in Columbia; we know the fact to have been that the expression was strongly objected to, and was saved merely from a want of time to discuss, (the last day of the session,) and the fear of losing the whole bill. But the sum appropriated (3000 D) shews they did not mean it for so large a field; for by the time the Pennsylv. avenue, between the two houses, is widened, newly gravelled, planted, brick tunnels instead of wood, the roads round the squares put in order, & that in the South front of the war office

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dug down to it's proper level, there will be no more of the 3000 D. left than will be wanting for constant repairs. With this view of the just and probable intention of the Legislature, I shall not think myself authorized to take advantage of a lax expression, forced on by circumstances, to carry the execution of the law into a region of expense which would merit great consideration before they should embark in it. Accept my friendly salutations, and assurances of great esteem and respect.